

**Friendship Heights
Transportation Management District
Advisory Committee
December 13, 2011**

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Voting Members

James Calderwood	Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers
Joe Dixon	GEICO
William P. Farley (Chair)	Town of Somerset
Kerri Gates	The JBG Companies
Campbell Graeb	Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights
Cobey R. Kuff	Wisconsin Place
Allison Lazare	United Educators Insurance
Ann F. Lewis	Friendship Heights Village
William Nathan	M&T Bank
Robert Schwarzbart	Friendship Heights Village Council

Non-voting Members

Sandra L. Brecher	MCDOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
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TMD Staff

Nakengi Byrd	MCDOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
Jim Carlson	MCDOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
Sheila Wilson	MCDOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services

Absent

Julie Davis	Somerset House Management Assn.
Cherian Eapen	M-NCPPC
Tiffany Gee (Vice Chair)	Chevy Chase Land Company
Capt. David Falcinelli	Montgomery County Police
Kenneth Hartman	B-CC Services Center

Guests

Sen. Brian Frosh	Maryland State Delegation
Jeffrey Slavin	Mayor, Town of Somerset

Abbreviations used herein include:

CERB = Committee Evaluation and Review Board
CMAQ = Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality
MDOT = Maryland Dept. of Transportation
PSC = Public Service Commission
TIGER = Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery

Items 1, 2 & 3 – Introductions/Minutes Approval/Chair’s Comments: Chair William Farley called the meeting to order and asked members and guests to introduce themselves.

Jim Carlson said there was a change to the November minutes: **Capt. David Falcinelli** has replaced **Capt. Russell Hamill** as the Second District Commander. **Capt. Falcinelli** will now be listed as a non-voting ex officio member. **Mr. Carlson** said he would issue an invitation to **Capt. Falcinelli** to attend future meetings.

Sheila Wilson noted that **Tiffany Gee** had been marked 'absent' by mistake at the November meeting. **Mr. Carlson** said he would correct the record.

ACTION: **Mr. Farley** asked for a motion to approve the November meeting minutes; a motion was made and seconded. The November minutes were approved with corrections.

Mr. Farley said **Senator Brian Frosh** was on the agenda and is expected later during the meeting. **Mr. Carlson** said **Sen. Frosh's** schedule was tight, so he is listed on the agenda at 9 am. The beginning of the meeting will deal with the usual Commuter Services updates and announcements. **Mr. Farley**, referring to the County's new bike sharing initiative, said that **Sen. Frosh** is a very good guest to have, as he has been heavily involved in environmental issues during his years in office, and transportation is a key component of environmental efforts.

Item 4 – TMD Work Program: **Mr. Carlson** called attention to the handout detailing the Committee's accomplishments and future projects in a table format. Additional information will be compiled and more projects added to the working document. This is in response to an anticipated request by the Committee Evaluation and Review Board (CERB), which will require the submission of a two-year work plan for the TMD and a list of Committee accomplishments. **Mr. Carlson** said the document had been sent previously to Committee members, asking for additional ideas that would improve the TMD's transportation infrastructure, pedestrian safety, transit, etc. The CERB is the County's periodic examination of its various boards and committees to measure their effectiveness and look for ways to make them more efficient and accountable; some committees may be retired and others consolidated during the process.

Discussion of the work plan included:

- Friendship Blvd. parking issue – Need better enforcement of parking rules; vehicles frequently block sidewalks and pedestrian access to the mid-block crosswalk. Vehicles also block the fire hydrant.
- Friendship Hts bus station – the Committee played a key role in keeping the bus station open, providing effective solutions to Metro's proposal to close it.
- Installing meters along Friendship Blvd. **Ms. Brecher** asked what the Friendship Heights Village did for parking enforcement. **Mr. Schwarzbart** said the Village has a parking enforcement staff.
- Lengthening pedestrian crossing times at the medical buildings – 5454 and 5530 Wisconsin Avenue.
- Adding coordinated left turn arrows at the Willard / Wisconsin Ave. / Wisconsin Circle intersection. Currently, only buses may turn left onto southbound Wisconsin Avenue when exiting Wisconsin Circle; allowing all traffic to turn left and using coordinated left turn arrows would enhance traffic flow and also pedestrian safety.

Ms. Brecher said the left turn issue had been previously been looked at by the State Highway Administration (SHA), but not pursued. **Ms. Brecher** said she could not recall the specific reasons given by SHA, but adding a green arrow cycle might reduce pedestrian crossing times because of the extra time needed on the signal for turns. Also, unimpeded traffic flow is not necessarily a desirable aim in the TMD. **Ms. Brecher** said the issue could again be pursued, however.

Campbell Graeb said that with the addition of a new medical office building on its grounds, Sibley Hospital has planned for a new shuttle service. **Mr. Graeb** believes the shuttle will provide free service to Metro. There is a shuttle now running which started service about three weeks ago, from Sibley to Tenleytown. **Mr. Graeb** asked that someone look into the possibility that the shuttle could also make a run to Friendship Heights. He added that some of the medical offices currently located in the two medical buildings on Wisconsin Avenue are moving to the Sibley facility, so it would make sense to pursue shuttle service from Friendship Heights. Service for the current shuttle is hourly throughout the day; **Mr. Graeb** suggested it should be continuous service.

Ms. Brecher said if such a recommendation were to be made, the Committee would have to think it through and be clear about the benefits of the shuttle – who it serves, why it’s needed, how does it fulfill the mission of the TMD, etc. If the shuttle is a zoning requirement by the DC government, then adding a stop in Friendship Heights may not be desirable from the District standpoint. She added that, regarding the TMD mission, if it could be shown that employees who work at the new Sibley building start their trips in Friendship Heights and would be more likely to drive there without the shuttle service, then the case might be made that the shuttle reduces traffic. Is there a need to be fulfilled that isn’t already being met by existing transit service?

Mr. Carlson said he would contact Sibley to gather some more facts about the shuttle. The Committee does not have enough information to make a recommendation at this point.

Items 5 & 6 – Commuter Services Updates: **Ms. Brecher** briefed the Committee on the status of the bike sharing project. **Ms. Brecher** said the County is finishing the details on an application for a grant from the Maryland Dept. of Transportation (MDOT) using federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funding. There was a recent public comment session and Committee members have been briefed previously on bike sharing. In brief, bike sharing is short-term use of a bicycle as an adjunct mode to transit, providing “first mile-last mile” connections between home and transit, transit and work. Montgomery County is seeking to extend the DC Capital Bikeshare program, currently operating in DC and Arlington, into Maryland. **Ms. Brecher** said the County had just received a grant for bike sharing in the Rockville-Shady Grove area through the Jobs Access Reverse Commute (JARC) grant. The MDOT grant would provide funding for the down county areas.

Ms. Brecher said this is the County’s fifth bike share grant application. Grants are being sought because bike sharing is costly to implement and operate. Each 19-dock station, the average size meant to accommodate 10 bikes, is \$56,000 in capital cost and \$25,000 per year in operating costs. Bike sharing programs operate a network of stations, since the program allows a bike to be checked out at one station and checked back in at the user’s destination.

Ms. Brecher said there is no guarantee that the County will receive the full amount requested, and there is at least one competing application from the Baltimore area. The grant will provide 80 percent of the capital costs, leaving the County to supply the remaining 20 percent; the County must provide 100 percent of the operating costs. Planners are looking at how to scale the system in an affordable way. The County just completed a public comment session, inviting residents to suggest locations for bike stations; the session was well attended, with many good ideas.

The County is seeking private sector involvement. The Chevy Chase Land Company has pledged to install two bike stations – one on their property in Friendship Heights, and the other one in downtown Bethesda. That is a big boost to the project. There are some additional locations proposed for Friendship Heights – Wisconsin Place, Willard Avenue, the Village Center are a few key locations under consideration. The

preference is to use public land where possible. Once the program is under way, Commuter Services will work with employers to encourage employee participation. Employers in DC and Arlington have sponsored employee memberships, which is something the County will encourage also. Membership in Capital Bikeshare is \$75 per year, which provides the first 30 minutes per trip is free; a majority of the trips are expected to be 30 minutes or less. Users can check out a bike for 30 minutes, dock it at one station, and then take out another bike at the same station for another 30 minutes. The bikes are very sturdy; the chain and gears are encased to avoid caught clothing, and they come with lights and a bell. The front of the bike provides for transport of items such as briefcases, etc. There are monthly (\$25) and daily (\$5) memberships also available.

Item 3 – Senator Brian Frosh Q&A: **Mr. Farley** welcomed **Senator Frosh** and described his legislative and other accomplishments. **Sen. Frosh** thanked the Committee for inviting him to the meeting. He said he was very supportive of bike sharing and had recently attended a meeting with MDOT in Annapolis, along with representatives from other jurisdictions, to discuss what the State could and ought to do to encourage more bicycle travel. The deputy director of the Capital Bikeshare program gave a very impressive presentation about bike sharing at the meeting. The DC program was well designed and has been remarkably successful. The Capital Bikeshare presenter said the membership numbers have exceeded their initial expectations, with losses anticipated during the first few years of operation. However, they are expected to break even by next year and begin to make a profit the following year.

Sen. Frosh said Arlington also selected Capital Bikeshare for its vendor, creating a seamless, unified system for bike sharing between the two jurisdictions. He added now that Montgomery County is beginning its program, locations such as Friendship Heights and Bethesda are obvious choices for bike sharing. **Sen. Frosh** said it was curious that the County had sought to first establish its program in the Rockville-Shady Grove area, and that it would have made more sense to link it first in areas closest to the DC border.

Ms. Brecher corrected the perception that the County had not been pursuing bike sharing for other areas. She said the County had submitted two major grant proposals for the downcounty areas under the TIGER I and TIGER II programs (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery), but had been denied funding; the grant for Rockville-Shady Grove, submitted later, just happened to be the first such funding that the State had approved and was submitted under the federal Jobs Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Program. The JARC program, which assists low income people with transportation needs, was tailored to bike sharing, and will assist with making transit connections from home to work and to job training programs (the County is working with Montgomery College). **Ms. Brecher** said the City of Rockville has committed an additional \$300,000 over three years. The separate MDOT grant proposal currently being completed will address funding for bike sharing in Friendship Heights, Bethesda and Silver Spring. The County had intended all along to establish bike sharing in the downcounty area.

Sen. Frosh said the business community is very enthusiastic about bike sharing. He was approached by representatives from Suburban Hospital and Chevy Chase Land Company during a Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber event, who said they would be willing to fund bike stations on their properties. Whole Foods also expressed interest in a station at its River Road location. Currently, employees arrive at the Bethesda Metro and then must catch two buses in order to get to work; bike sharing would make perfect sense for them. **Sen. Frosh** said that with a bike sharing station at Bethesda Metro and one at Whole Foods, employees could get to work in about seven minutes and they would save money.

Sen. Frosh said if Montgomery County comes up short on its request from the State for capital funds for the program, he plans to introduce a bond bill to help secure funding. He said there is a strong possibility that

bike sharing can be implemented quickly and greatly enhances the ability of commuters to get to work and home using an efficient and cheaper means of transportation.

Mr. Schwarzbart noted that, while the State will be able to assist with capital costs, it will not be able to help with operating expenses. Is there any chance the Montgomery Delegation can assist? **Sen. Frosh** said he did not think so; the State, like the County, has experienced severe budgetary shortfalls over the last five years, cutting roughly \$5 billion out of the State budget. There is an additional \$1 billion shortfall again this year. The government is looking for ways to raise money and to cut money to make up the difference. Adding any programs to the State's operating budget is not a high probability at this point. **Sen. Frosh** said the constraint on capital money is not as severe.

Jeffrey Slavin said marketing the program in the area should be a high priority, since the operating funds come from memberships. **Ms. Brecher** clarified that the program will not receive 100 percent of every member's contribution: where the revenue goes depends on the member's home zip code and, in terms of usage fees, it depends on the location where the bike is checked out. This is how the protocol works for Capital Bikeshare.

Ms. Brecher said the priority is to identify dense centers of high activity to ensure a network can ultimately operate at a profit or at least near break-even in order to cover operating costs.

Mr. Schwarzbart said news reports indicate the County's fiscal situation has improved; although there is a shortfall this year, it isn't as severe. Has the State's fortunes also improved? **Sen. Frosh** said the State's position has improved, but only marginally. There are still severe cuts that need to be made. Assistance to county governments is about a third of the State's annual budget; some cuts will have to be made, although hopefully not as draconian as some have proposed. The senate president would like to shift the burden of teachers' pensions to the counties, which would be a huge burden on local jurisdictions. The current estimates put the cuts somewhere between \$900 million and \$1.1 billion. The good news for Montgomery County is that it is short "only" \$120 million.

Mr. Graeub asked about the status of the gas tax. **Sen. Frosh** said it is still undecided. The last recommendation was for \$0.15 a gallon. He does not believe it will be that high if it does pass. Some Democratic members have said they will not vote for any gas tax, as it is regressive and hits their constituents at a difficult time in the economy. **Mr. Graeub** said it should be called a user fee instead of a tax. **James Calderwood** added that the current gas tax is \$0.23 ½ a gallon; in DC it is \$0.20 and in Virginia it is \$0.17 ½ - if Maryland raises its tax, the State may end up with less rather than more money because people will travel to other jurisdictions. **Sen. Frosh** said the calculations show that the loss is still offset by the higher tax revenue generated, even though some people will buy less or will buy it elsewhere.

Mr. Schwarzbart asked if any other revenue raising sources were under consideration. **Sen. Frosh** said every conceivable source is being closely looked at. There is no consensus building around any particular proposal. A surtax on each additional million in income has been discussed previously, but the support does not appear to be there. Currently, there is discussion about making adjustments to mortgage and other tax deductions.

Mr. Farley asked about the status of the Purple Line, and if there are any initiatives currently under consideration that would take cars off the road in Montgomery County. **Sen. Frosh** said there is nothing under consideration at this time. The Purple Line shows a lot of promise, but is years away from completion and where the funding is going to come from is still unclear.

Mr. Schwarzbart said there is a potential problem with downed power lines on River Road, just north of the intersection with Willard Avenue. Tree limbs have been resting on the lines and should be trimmed before they fall and, as a result, close a major State road. **Sen. Frosh** said to send him an email and his office would look into it.

Ms. Brecher asked if the State would have an opportunity to weigh in on the federal transit subsidy issue. There is a strong likelihood that if Congress doesn't act before the end of the calendar year, the parity that was achieved between transit and parking benefits will end. The transit/vanpool tax-free benefit will revert back to \$120 (or \$125, using the Consumer Price Index), while the parking benefit will remain at \$240. **Sen. Frosh** said he did not know if the State can influence the outcome, other than writing to the Congress and Senators involved with the legislation. With the failure of the 'Super Committee' to achieve consensus on the budget, it seems unlikely that anything will be done in time. **Ms. Brecher** said the rollback will affect huge numbers of commuters, and it affects Commuter Services' ability to reach out to employers and employees with transit alternatives.

Mr. Slavin asked about the status of the Pepco oversight hearings. **Sen. Frosh** said that the Public Service Commission (PSC) is coming out shortly with its reliability regulations, stemming from legislation passed in the last session. **Sen. Frosh** said he did not believe the legislation was strong enough, strengthened it one point on the Senate floor, and then it was subsequently watered down again in conference. There is a clear charge, however, to set reliability standards and ensure there are financial incentives for utilities to meet those targets. Pepco has been more visible in its efforts to be more reliable and has embarked on an aggressive tree trimming campaign, repairing substations, and other efforts. It may be due to weather, but there have been fewer complaints about Pepco this year compared to last year at this time. If the PSC standards seem tough enough, **Sen. Frosh** says he will not pursue any additional legislation. **Mr. Graeb** said wires should be installed underground, especially at new developments.

Mr. Farley thanked **Sen. Frosh** for his efforts with regulating Pepco, and also for attending the Committee meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 10 AM
Next meeting date: January 10, 2012